



Telecommunications, Warning and Information Systems

Emergency Management Division
Washington Military Department

Background

Telecommunications and warning systems utilize the latest available technology to provide early alert and critical information management before, during, and after a disaster. Rapid and reliable electronic systems are essential for warning the public and local governments of an impending emergency or disaster and for allowing emergency response personnel at all levels to rapidly share information and coordinate response actions.

The Telecommunications and Warning Section is responsible for maintaining and operating various statewide radio, telephony, and information systems connected to the state Emergency Operations Center (EOC). These systems provide the capability to receive and send messages that will warn state and local governments and the public of impending emergencies or disasters, and to allow appropriate direction and control activities between appropriate officials. These capabilities must be available and/or rapidly restored during and after the disaster.

Benefits

Through its complex of information networks, this section provides reliable primary and back-up systems for telecommunications among state, local, and federal response agencies to share information and coordinate response and recovery efforts. The section also develops communications plans and systems in support of state and local emergency response plans. The section manages federal matching funds, when available, for local jurisdictions to upgrade and maintain basic elements of their emergency communications and warning systems. This section also provides technical advice and assistance to state and local governments.

Primary Communication Systems

The Telecommunications Section maintains the following communication systems:

Commercial Telephone—Primary means for communicating with local and state agencies. Includes public switched, cellular, facsimile, and secure capabilities.

National Warning System—A dedicated landline voice system used to pass warning and notification information among federal, state, and local agencies.

Emergency Alert System (EAS)—In coordination with the broadcast industry, EAS is used to provide alert type information essential to the public concerning an emergency.

Information Systems Technology (Automation)—Includes local area networks for the State EOC with wide-area connectivity to local emergency operations centers and other government entities, an Emergency Information Management System containing several different applications, and Internet and Intranet capabilities.

A Central Computerized Enforcement Service System—A landline data system primarily used by law enforcement agencies that is available to pass warning and notification information to local emergency management agencies.

Emergency Management Weather Information Network—A satellite based automated network for receiving real-time weather data, including warnings from the National Weather Service.

Special Contingencies Circuits—Dedicated circuits used for initial notification and emergency response to an incident at the Columbia Generating Station nuclear power plant, the Umatilla Chemical Depot, and the Hanford Site.

Comprehensive Emergency Management Network—A Very High Frequency (VHF) radio system that is the primary back-up system for communicating with all county and city EOCs or Command Posts. It is used day-to-day by local government and some state agencies.

A Mobile Satellite Voice/Radio System—A limited satellite-based network that allows the state EOC to communicate direct via satellite with select temporary/mobile locations around the state in the event of a catastrophic event.

State Emergency Communications Using Radio Effectively—A High Frequency (HF) radio system used for point-to-point communications. It operates on eight assigned frequencies between 2-8 MHZ. Use is limited to agencies having this capability.

Federal Emergency Management Agency National Radio System—A HF radio system providing federal to state communications.

Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service—Backup communication system that provides emergency communications to state and local government using amateur radio operators (HAMS) and their equipment.

Other HF and VHF Radio Systems—Included is use of National Guard, Civil Air Patrol, and the United States Coast Guard systems and other public safety systems.

Digital Microwave System—Utilized to interface with other Washington State agencies, Oregon, and federal agencies. The system provides radio, telephone, WAN, and network management circuitry.

Contact

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